



# Indiana Department of Education

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## Resource Guide for the Content Area Teacher

**Indiana Department of Education**  
**Office of English Learning & Migrant Education**

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# ***Helping English Language Learners Understand Content Area Lessons***

English learners (ELs) experience intense problems in content area learning because they have not yet acquired the language proficiency needed to succeed in understanding subject-matter content. Because the language of academic subjects (such as social studies, science, math) requires a high degree of reading and writing ability that English learners do not have, they experience immense difficulties reading their textbooks and understanding the vocabulary unique to particular subjects. Although these chapters are shared with English Learners in mind, these strategies will be useful for a large range of students that benefit from differentiation, increased participation, and equitable access to the curriculum. This article reviews practical strategies that content area teachers can use to support English learners in their classrooms.

## **Teacher Preparation**

- Survey the text for difficulty keeping in mind the levels of English learners in your classroom; determine your standard or objective; select the concepts to teach; eliminate unnecessary information that will be too difficult for EL students of low English proficiency; choose key specific vocabulary to pre-teach; develop assessments to test that content.
- Identify vocabulary words that you think might be difficult for English learners to understand when they read the text. Write EL-friendly definitions for each - that is, simple, brief definitions EL students can easily understand.
- Determine which visuals, artifacts, gestures, etc. you will need to make the meaning of the words clear to the EL students. Visuals are powerful tools for comprehension instruction because they offer concrete, memorable representations of abstract content.
- Use highly illustrated books of various levels of difficulty teaching your content.
- Plan a series of questions and interactions that will help you involve your students and determine their levels of understanding of the words.

## **Building Background Knowledge**

Before reading a selection aloud or before students read a text, try taking seven to ten minutes to build word and background knowledge. This will increase all students' comprehension of the text.

English learners have great difficulty jumping into new texts without any background support. Students should know at least something about the topic before reading. Some topics may be unfamiliar to students (e.g. recycling or fundraising) if they have never done that before. Pictures, drawings, or short skits can help develop relevant background information. On the other hand, if a teacher is talking about the Civil War, perhaps some EL students have experienced something similar in their home country, and might be able to understand those concepts better if they understand how it connects to the text.

Students need to know essential vocabulary in order to comprehend the text. Therefore, it is important to use several strategies to build the background that leads to better reading comprehension for EL students. It can be beneficial to review many words we often take for granted - not only for the benefit of EL students, but also for students who may not come to school with a rich vocabulary background or exposure to certain experiences. For example, the concepts of democracy may be difficult for all young children to understand at first. Think of examples to which your students can relate.

- Create interest in the subject by using pictures, real objects, maps, or personal experiences.
- Repeat vocabulary words as often as you can so that EL students can remember them.
- Relate material to students' lives whenever possible.
- Build text-specific knowledge by providing students with information from the text beforehand, particularly if the text is conceptually difficult or has an abundance of important information.  
For example, if there are six main topics on the animal kingdom, highlight/discuss them beforehand.
- Explain difficult concepts and label them with key words EL students can remember. Repeat the word several times in different sentences. For example, "This is the Statue of Liberty. *Liberty* means freedom. The people of France gave us the Statue of *Liberty*..."
- Establish the purpose for reading (i.e. "Today we are going to read to find out: what are the examples of freedom/liberty in our country.").

## **Pre-teaching Vocabulary and Concepts**

Before doing an activity, teaching content, or reading a story in class, pre-teaching vocabulary is always helpful, especially for English language learners. This will allow them to identify words and then to place them in context and remember them. You can pre-teach vocabulary by:

- Role playing or “acting it out”	- Using gestures
- Showing real objects	- Pointing to pictures
- Doing quick drawings on the board	

- Introduce the vocabulary and model its use. Dig deeper into vocabulary! Use every trick you can find to help explain its meaning to the EL students. Give several examples for each term. Teach words in context – this is much more effective than isolated memorization.
- Ask students to give you their examples of how the word can be used.
- Choose different strategies to teach each word. Use different ways of engaging the students to listen for new words and produce each word in context. Remember: EL students need 8-20 encounters with the new word to remember it!
- Use hands-on activities and demonstrations to teach academic vocabulary. For example, if the students are learning about a cell, the teacher could introduce academic vocabulary while creating a cell model from Play-Doh with students. The students could work in groups to make their own cell, use the academic vocabulary while doing the activity, present afterwards to the teacher or class, or write a report.
- Post new vocabulary on a word wall, and review the words daily. Swap out old words as necessary.

## **Pre-reading Strategies to Increase Comprehension**

- Explain specific terms of your classroom's interaction to English learners. Make sure they know instructional words used every day, such as "follow directions", "describe", "start at the top of the page", "read to the bottom of page 4", "highlight the verbs only", "use the steps in your guide", etc.
- Teachers may expect students to understand terms like "caption", "excerpt", "index", "passage", "glossary", "preface", "quotation", "section", "selection", etc., but these terms are unknown to many English language learners. Before working with the text, EL students need to be explicitly taught all these terms in order to participate in classroom learning activities.
- Explicitly teach and model all learning strategies for EL students in your classroom. What do we mean when we say "analyze"? How do we do that? What is the language needed to participate in this learning activity? Model the strategy, walk EL students through the process. Once EL students have started to develop proficiency in those behaviors, they can concentrate more on the content academic language.
- Review the main concepts from the text you want to teach. Decide how you might best make these concepts relevant and accessible to all of your students including English learners. This might be through:
  - Film on a related topic
  - Experiment
  - Show and Tell
  - Text read by the teacher
  - Discussion
  - Field trip
  - Student reading assignment

## **Introducing the Text**

- Use visuals related to the content (real objects, charts, posters, graphic organizers). Before reading, discuss illustrations, charts, graphs found in the text.
- While discussing the text, make the text visible to all students (use an overhead projector); point to the parts of the text, sentences, and words you are discussing.
- Model thinking aloud about what you are reading, and strategies for figuring out difficult words.
- Model how to summarize what has been read.
- Give EL students a reason for reading. Before asking the students to read the text, make students aware of what they should look for. If the goal is for them to identify cause and effect, point out several examples of this beforehand. If they are supposed to scan the text and find information filling out the graphic organizer, teach them how to scan. If EL students don't have the clarity of what they are supposed to do, they will end up translating the text word by word and will be able to read only one paragraph instead of scanning ten paragraphs for important information.
- Graphic organizers can be used at all grade levels and at all English proficiency levels. Graphic organizers provide a visual for the kinds of abstract thinking that students are doing when they organize text to understand it. Because of their limited English proficiency, English language learners will not be able to absorb the entire amount of content knowledge that their native English-speaking peers are able to absorb. They need to learn essential concepts and vocabulary of the lesson. Using graphic organizers with EL students is a way to separate large amounts of content information into manageable pieces of essential information for EL students.

## **Reading the Text**

- Assign reading partners: pair English learners with fluent readers. After partner reading, ask them to summarize and discuss what they read and learned.
- Instruct the group/pair to create a graphic organizer while studying. Graphic organizers (thinking maps, sequencing information, categorizing information) can be used as a pre-teaching or post-teaching strategy for introducing or reinforcing key concepts and how they are related. The more connections English learners make to the organization of the content before reading, the easier it will be for them to understand and focus on what is important. When teachers and/or students use graphic organizers at the end of a lesson, this helps to reinforce and bring greater meaning and understanding to what they have read.
- Develop study guides to guide EL students through their content area textbook reading by focusing their attention on the major ideas presented. Study guides can include graphic organizers, key vocabulary, and guiding questions.
- After silent reading of every paragraph/passage of the text in cooperative groups, let the groups summarize the gist of the paragraph/passage in one sentence they all agree on and write it down – students will end up with the summary of the difficult text.
- Have bilingual dictionaries for all native languages available to students. Teach students how to use dictionaries.
- While students are working in groups, pairs, and individually, circulate around the room. Provide scaffolding by asking appropriate questions that help students proceed with the task. Model the use of academic language for EL students and show students concrete examples of how it should be used.
- Keep asking clarifying questions to check understanding. Adjust the format of questions to the English proficiency levels of EL students. Reword/explain difficult content in different ways, making sure to incorporate non-verbal contextual clues. Instructional conversations are critical to EL students' learning!
- Encourage students to talk about the text and to use the lesson's vocabulary by giving them appropriate assignments adjusted to the students' levels of English proficiency.



## **Speaking: Production of Oral Academic English**

It is very important for English learners to talk and think out loud while they are learning from the text. Encourage EL students to speak in class as much as possible in order to actively practice academic vocabulary. In this way, EL students will learn and remember the academic English and content area vocabulary they need to succeed. Remember to be sensitive to EL students who may be afraid to make mistakes.

- Scaffold students' speaking by asking questions appropriate for their level of English proficiency, giving them sentence starters, prompting responses and asking them to say the word/phrase again in different situations.
- Elicit more language. In order to learn academic language, English learners need to practice content language all the time. Ask them to retell in a group what they read and learned. Ask EL students to provide more elaborate responses and add more details by saying: "Tell me all you can about...", "Tell me more about..."
- Scaffold their speaking by asking leading questions. Instead of simple "yes or no" questions, ask questions that are interactive and meaningful. For example, "What do you think? What should we change?"
- In cooperative groups, let them prepare questions, conduct interviews and report back.
- Give students the script of an activity and ask them to take turns giving directions to the other members of their cooperative group.
- Use group problem-based and project-based learning strategies (using English for brainstorming, discussing, and presenting). Model solving the problem, then let the groups do that. Let the group work on a project giving appropriate assignments to EL students.
- Model correct usage of the language. Instead of frequently correcting pronunciation or grammar, reaffirm the student's idea and then restate using correct grammar and in context.

## **Writing: Production of Written Academic English**

Writing is another way for EL students to demonstrate and extend their understanding of a text and its contents.

- Use modeled writing, guided writing, shared writing, and partner work before assigning independent writing.
- Show a sample of what is expected.
- Relieve EL students of the “blank page” syndrome – model the task to be done, support, and give students ideas or examples. Provide structure for their writing piece: sentence starters, fill-in the blank exercises, sentence strips, etc.
- Give questions for cooperative learning teams to answer together.
- Ask teams to compose questions about the content and use those questions on the test.
- Give students a graphic organizer to complete. Graphic organizers can become prewriting activities that help EL students organize the information and their thoughts before they write. This will also demonstrate that they understood the concepts and content, even if they only use a symbol or write one or two words for each category.
- Ask students to practice writing short simple summaries of what they read.
- Don't grade the EL students' work down for grammar and spelling mistakes. Concentrate on the content.

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## ***Did You Know?***

### **Second Language Learning: What every classroom teacher needs to know**

It takes 7 -12 years to become proficient in a new language.

The silent period can last 6 months to a year.

The acculturation process takes time.

The development of second language skills takes place in four areas. Those areas are listening, speaking, reading and writing.

Students must have a rich oral language experience background so that when they begin to read they have a meaningful reference point. Meaningful experiences facilitate comprehension as well as help to maintain and promote student interest.

While teaching phonics is not a priority, students have to be able to hear the differences between their native language and English before they can be expected to produce sounds.

Second language acquisition research has shown us that a student acquires language more effectively when language exposure has been provided that is meaningful and that input is comprehensible for students.

Comprehensible input involves modeling activities and describing them at the same time. All new subject matter should be introduced by modeling either before the entire class or with the student on an individual basis. In addition to modeling expected behavior, visual clues offer meaningful reference for immediate comprehension of new vocabulary words and experiences. Repetition of words and phrases that are meaningless to the student are not the recommended pattern for provision of meaningful language experience or oral language development.

Students who have the advantage of strong literacy skills in their first language bring key concepts to the classroom with them.

Conceptual skills transfer to the English language, so the important thing to remember is that skills do not have to be taught again. Language and vocabulary have to be taught in order to access the knowledge these students already possess. Development of language skills for success in academic content area courses takes a long time.

## ***Creating a Welcoming Environment***

**Classroom is physically inviting.**

- Represent race and language of all students in the classroom (i.e. bulletin boards, posters, bi/multi-lingual-labeled classroom objects).
- Validate all native languages of students (i.e. allow 'wait time' for adequate processing in native language, which helps cognitive development, self-esteem, second language acquisition and academic preparation).

**Teachers should create POSITIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENTS and instructional strategies that support/promote language and concept acquisition and development.**

- Learn to pronounce the child's name correctly.
- Learn something about the child's home culture.
- Assign a buddy to familiarize a new child with school and classroom routines. Rotate the assignment among several students.
- Include the child in all class activities.
- Maintain an encouraging, success-oriented atmosphere. ACCEPT ERRORS in grammar and pronunciation. Model correct forms of grammar usage in your restatement and/or paraphrase of the student's answer.
- Recognize that standardized tests are often inappropriate for language minority students.
- Tape or record a new student's use of English early in the year; repeat at two or three month intervals.
- If the student is writing, save early samples to compare with later writing.
- Praise students for successes as they learn English.
- Keep classroom language consistent.

# ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

## **How Teachers Can Help New Language Minority Students in Their Cultural Adaptation**

### **Communicate an attitude of unconditional acceptance:**

- Learn and use language minority students' names with proper pronunciation.
- Learn and share something, general or specific, about the new students' countries.
- Encourage the new student's sharing about himself/herself.
- Allow language minority students to share their knowledge. Allow them to "teach" their language, customs, etc. to the class.
- Emphasize similarities more than differences.
- Discuss validity of other ways of life.
- Visit the families.
- Invite language minority students' role models/people from their community to participate in school.

### **Ensure feelings of belonging:**

- Assign buddies to each new language minority student. (Coach the buddies).
- Use peer tutors. Properly structure cooperative learning and small group instruction.

### **Ensure that success is achieved and felt every day:**

- Seat new language minority students where they can be surrounded by other peers and have an optimal chance at observing, listening, and participating.
- Provide a low-anxiety environment.
- Teach, model, demonstrate, and explain your content in different ways.
- Contact parents frequently with positive reports. Send home bilingual notes, explanations of rules, and bilingual report cards.
- Don't expect or demand instant/complete acculturation.

### **Multicultural Education Teaching Strategies**

- Decorate classrooms, hallways, and the library media center with murals, bulletin boards, posters, artifacts, and other materials representative of the students in the class or school, or other cultures being studied. Posters and other information are available from travel bureaus and education agencies, consulates, ethnic and cultural organizations, etc.
- Help your students develop the skills needed to locate and organize information about other cultures that is relevant to the content you are teaching.
- Form a multicultural club; engage students in meaningful and serious discussions.
- Designate a permanent bulletin board for multicultural news and displays.
- Feature stories in the school newspaper on multicultural topics; publish a multicultural newspaper or newsletter.

- Hold a mock legislature to debate current or historical issues affecting minorities and cultural groups. Hold oratorical, debate, essay, poster, art, brain brawl, or other competition with a multicultural focus.

### **Ask Yourself:**

- Does your classroom conduct inspire your students to respect one another and be open and honest in their communications with you and other students?
- Do you try to prevent prejudices or stereotyped thinking from influencing your discipline or evaluation of students?
- Do you take the initiative in dispelling prejudices, stereotypes and misunderstandings among students?
- Do you strive to avoid expressions and actions which might be offensive to members of other groups?
- Have you evaluated your textbooks to determine whether they contain fair and appropriate treatment of minority groups?
- Do your classroom pictures of influential people include people from all races?
- Do you use books, magazines and newspaper articles relating to interracial experiences and problems that can be discussed in class for better human relations?
- Do you show all racial and ethnic groups in your bulletin board displays?
- Do your outside reading assignments include accounts of all races and interracial experiences, and are you familiar with bibliographies containing such readings? Have you checked with your school librarian to learn how much material of this type is available in your school library?
- Have you read any books or other articles lately to increase your understanding of and sensitivity to the needs, problems, and frustrations of minority students?
- Do you take the initiative in discouraging or preventing patterns of informal discrimination, segregation, or exclusion of minority group members from school clubs, committees, leadership roles, etc.?
- Have you attempted to establish and maintain some meaningful contact and dialogue with the parents, guardians, and communities from which your students come?
- Do you attempt to give special help to any minority student and parent who needs it without being patronizing?

Adapted from Difference, a Public Service Campaign, Boston TV

<b>Unresponsive Mainstream Classroom: Submersion/ Sink or Swim</b>	<b>Responsive Mainstream Classroom: Collaborative Sheltered Immersion</b>
Students' primary language is seen as detrimental to English language acquisition.	Students' primary languages are honored as beneficial to and necessary for English language acquisition.
Parents are seen as problematic and/or assumed to be disinterested.	Involvement of parents is obvious, especially in the development of the primary language.
Students' cultural backgrounds are perceived as irrelevant and often dismissed as inferior.	Connections are made to students' cultural backgrounds and experiences to bridge development of new concepts, knowledge, and skills.
Assessment is evaluative; assessment <i>of</i> learning; "who got it".	Assessment is informative; assessment <i>for</i> learning; show "what they got".
Little to no articulation between mainstream and EL or bilingual programs, curriculum, or teachers.	Mainstream and EL or bilingual teachers work collaboratively to provide inclusive instruction using one curriculum--from planning through implementation and reflection.
Feedback is given to students after instruction and scores are based on a percentage correct.	Feedback to students is provided before instruction via rubrics and checklists; scores are based on final level of performance.
English Learners are grouped by language proficiency level, limiting opportunities for interaction with students of mixed proficiencies.	English Learners engage in collaborative learning through grade-level groupings with students of mixed language proficiencies and students whose primary language is English.
Teacher-centered and whole-class instruction is predominant; traditional instructional arrangements and methods; single text, single tasks, single instructional frameworks.	Emphasis on learners as the makers of meaning and builders of knowledge; large instructional repertoire of arrangements and methods; student choice of task to complete; variety of instructional frameworks to support a range of knowledge and skill levels within the class.

## ***Classroom Instructional Tips***

**Collaborate with your building EL Teacher during planning and instruction of Content.**

1. **PROMOTE INTERACTION** between ELs and native English speaking peers through cooperative learning activities where anxiety is at a minimum. Circulate and meet individually with each group. Be sure not to let the best student do all the work. ELs do NOT benefit from this. Use the divide and conquer method with group roles assigned to each student in the group.
2. **MAKE ORAL PRESENTATIONS more COMPREHENSIBLE** with visuals, pointing, monitoring your use of idioms, pictures, props, manipulatives, facial expressions, posing a variety of questions at different levels, recapping main topics in a variety of ways having students be actively involved by standing, pointing, getting active...
3. **Use VISUALS** that transcend language barriers. (Prints, pictures, artifacts, crafts, tools, objects, photographs, books, costumes...) Have students guess what it is, what it is made of, how it is used...
4. **ADAPT SPEECH** and written materials. Use visual aides (charts, graphs, pictures). Speak slowly and enunciate well. Consciously use more open-ended questions (How/What). REPEAT key phrases often.
5. **PROVIDE both ORAL and WRITTEN INSTRUCTIONS** for each day's assignments.
6. **THINK ALOUD** method. For example, "Well I can see that this is increasing, and this is decreasing, what do you think that means?" Ask students to CLARIFY and JUSTIFY their IDEAS both orally and in writing.
7. **Parallel Activities:** Have students: DRAW AND LABEL DIAGRAMS or pictures related to concept, CLASSIFY words into specific CATEGORIES, fill in charts, order sentences in correct sequences, USE KEY VOCABULARY to answer how/what/why questions, SUMMARIZE info from readings, observations, draw conclusions or OPINIONS, etc.
8. **3-TIERED APPROACH:** When a concept is explored in 3 ways: a teacher demonstration (ELs can listen and observe without having to produce language), a group investigation (a chance to use new language with others in a relaxed setting), an independent investigation (a more formal, final report which can be oral or written)
9. **Encourage use of NATIVE LANGUAGE** for comprehension (bilingual aides, let students respond in their native language to questions asked in English, locate native language resource books, films, magazines, write in journals/reading log in native language, peer tutoring where a Level 4 student helps a Level 1 student).



10. **THEMATICALLY ORGANIZED CURRICULUM** has been found to work well with ELs. Make connections; achieve deeper understanding of a concept by studying it from several disciplinary views. Brainstorm webs, hands-on activities, exploration, and active participation, culminating events like field trips or classroom extravaganzas.
11. **Emphasize the DEPTH of coverage of concepts over the BREADTH.** “Less is more”: Use more in-depth thinking about fewer topics.
12. **ADAPT MATERIAL/LESSONS** to meet the needs of ELs (lower reading level, more visuals, hands-on activities, cooperative group work, music, role-playing). **Use MULTI-SENSORY ACTIVITY-CENTERED** approaches to teaching (visual, auditory, oral, and kinesthetic).  
Examples:
  - a. Use cartoons and leave the balloons above the speakers blank to be filled in by students
  - b. Keep a variety of games to be played by pairs or small groups
  - c. Show the same information through a variety of different charts and visuals.
  - d. Write instructions and problems in shorter and less complex sentences
  - e. De-emphasize speed and emphasize accuracy
  - f. Have students underline key words or facts in written assignments
  - g. FLEXIBILITY in curriculum development is a key factor for instruction of LEPs
  - h. Minimize anxiety and frustration
  - i. Allow ELs to take risks
13. **REAL Context:** Provide opportunities for students to hear and use meaningful language in a real context: art activities, science experiments, games, music, field trips, role-playing.
14. **PROVIDE INTERACTION** with native English speakers via learning groups.
15. **PREVIEW Lesson:** Whenever possible, preview lessons in the student’s home language to facilitate understanding the classroom presentation in English.
16. **QUESTIONING:** Encourage participation by asking questions that can be answered at the student’s level of English, such as yes/no and one-word answers.
17. **ACCEPT ERRORS:** When a student begins contributing to class discussions, accept errors in grammar and pronunciation and continue to model appropriate language.
18. **Build ORAL FLUENCY:** Concentrate on building students’ oral English vocabulary as a prelude to reading with comprehension.
19. **BUILD A BILINGUAL DICTIONARY** of terms from the daily lesson.

20. Involve them in **HANDS-ON ACTIVITIES** that provide opportunity for purposeful language use. Care needs to be taken that content is NOT “watered down”. Do NOT lower expectations for ELs. They need to be intellectually challenged. Pictures, charts, and timelines make materials more “user friendly”. Comprehensible chunks of words or phrases can concisely convey essential information.
21. **ORGANIZERS/CONCEPT MAPS** that lay out a picture of the big ideas in a unit and how they are connected to one another (i.e. clusters, semantic maps, story boards, matrices, webs, Venn Diagrams).
22. **DRAW AND LABEL DIAGRAMS** or pictures related to concept, CLASSIFY words into specific CATEGORIES, fill in charts, order sentences in correct sequences. USE KEY VOCABULARY to answer how/what/why questions. SUMMARIZE info from readings, observations; DRAW CONCLUSIONS or STATE OPINIONS.
23. **USE LANGUAGE MARKERS** often, such as first, then, next, but, however, also, as well as. When possible, **USE ACTIONS** (body movements, gestures, facial expressions) to reinforce vocabulary.
24. **Pull in PRIOR KNOWLEDGE** before a new lesson by BRAINSTORMING with the students on the board.
25. **ENGAGE STUDENTS IN SOLVING INTERESTING REAL-LIFE PROBLEMS** that encourage both critical thinking and basic skills development and practice. Design activities that relate to the student’s REAL-LIFE EXPERIENCES, such as paychecks, taxes, shopping, grades, etc. Avoid overemphasizing basic skills, which inhibit students in developing problem solving, reasoning, and other higher order thinking skills.

**NOTE:** With a nurturing, language rich environment, your students may be reasonably fluent in conversational English within one or two years. Bear in mind that language minority students differ from one another in personality, interests, motivation, English exposure, amount of formal schooling, language proficiency levels, and cultural backgrounds. Those who have already developed a strong educational foundation in their home language before entering your classroom are likely to experience a positive self-concept and success in their new environment. Other students may require several years to perform up to their academic potential.

## ***Newcomers Learning to Read***

- 1. Read to newcomers everyday.** Appropriate reading material for beginning English Learners (ELs) should include at least one of these characteristics:
  - a. Numerous illustrations that help clarify the text
  - b. Story plots that are action-based
  - c. Little text on each page
  - d. Text that contains repetitive, predictable phrases
  - e. High-frequency vocabulary and useful words
  - f. Text that employs simple sentence structures
- 2. Use reading strategies to increase students' comprehension.** When you read to beginning ELs, be sure to make language comprehensible to them.
  - a. Point to the corresponding pictures as you read the text
  - b. Act out, dramatize, and provide models and manipulative items for students to handle
  - c. Read sentences at a slow-to-normal speed, using expressive tone
  - d. Allow time after each sentence or paragraph for students to assimilate to the material
  - e. Verify comprehension of the story by asking students to point to items in the illustrations and to answer yes/no and either/or questions
  - f. Read the same story on successive days. Pause at strategic points and invite students to supply the words or phrases they know
  - g. Point to the words in the text as you read them. This is a particularly useful tool for students who need to learn the left-to-right flow of English text
  - h. When students are familiar with the story, invite them to "read" along with you as you point to the words
  - i. If appropriate for younger students, use Big Books, as both text and illustrations can be seen easily
- 3. Teach the alphabet.** Preliterate students and literate newcomers who speak a language that does not use the Roman alphabet need direct instruction in letter recognition and formation as well as beginning phonetics.
- 4. Use authentic literature.** Begin with materials that have easily understood plots, high frequency vocabulary, and few idiomatic expressions.
- 5. Teach phonetics in context.** Using authentic literature, you can introduce and reinforce letter recognition, beginning and ending sounds, blends, rhyming words, silent letters, homonyms, etc. Phonics worksheets are not generally useful to the newcomer since they present new vocabulary items out of context.
- 6. Make sure students understand the meaning.** Your students may learn to decode accurately but be unable to construct the meaning out of the words they have read.

Teach newcomers to reflect on what they have decoded and to ask questions to be sure they understand.

- 7. Check comprehension through sequencing activities.** Check student comprehension with one or more of the following activities.
  - a. Write individual sentences from the text on separate sheets of drawing paper; then read or have students read each sentence and illustrate it
  - b. Informally test students' abilities to sequence material from a story; print sentences from a section of the story on paper strips; mix up the strips; have the students put the story back in order
  - c. Check students' ability to order words within a sentence; write several sentences from the text on individual strips of paper; cut the strips into words; have students arrange each set of words into a sentence
- 8. Provide for audio review.** Set up a tape recorder and record stories as you read. Newcomers then have the opportunity to listen to a story and read along as many times as they wish.
- 9. Teach reading in the home language first.** Whenever feasible, students should have an opportunity to receive reading instruction in their home language prior to receiving reading instruction in English. If you are a mainstream teacher and find yourself responsible for the developmental reading instruction of preliterate newcomers, allow newcomers time to develop some aural familiarity with English and build a vocabulary base before beginning reading instruction.
- 10. Encourage reading outside of the classroom.** Stock your classroom library and encourage newcomers' parents to join the public library and check out picture books, books with read-along tapes, and home-language books, if available.
- 11. Encourage newcomers to explore creative writing in English.** Students will learn to write faster when they have real reasons to write. Motivate students to write by providing them with meaningful reasons to write.
- 12. Establish an English Learner Center.** Fill EL Center with activities for your new language learners. Here are some of the items you may want to include in your EL Center. It is not necessary to put in everything at once. Add to the Learning Center a little bit at a time.
  - a. Tape recorder and/or CD player with headphones
  - b. Copies of appropriate activity pages and keep them in a loose-leaf binder/large envelope/folder with pockets
  - c. Crayons, scissors, pencils, erasers, and paper
  - d. An EL notebook
  - e. An EL folder for dictionary pages
  - f. Labels for classroom objects
  - g. A picture file (class-made or commercial)

- h. Well illustrated magazines for cutting out pictures
- i. Blank 3x5" index cards to be used for flashcards or concentration games
- j. A picture dictionary
- k. Home-language books on your newcomers' reading levels
- l. Home-language magazines with lots of pictures
- m. Nonfiction picture books from the library that cover the same course content material as you are currently teaching
- n. Beginning phonics book with CDs
- o. CDs of music in both English and home language
- p. Picture books and well-illustrated beginning-to-read books with accompanying CDs
- q. Sample games: dot-to-dot activities, word searches, concentration games, sequencing activities, and jigsaw puzzles
- r. An "object" box containing small manipulative objects for beginning vocabulary or phonics learning

**13. Make up individualized Starter Packs for your newcomers.** The Starter Pack enables entry-level students to work independently on activities suited to their specific needs. Encourage students to work on these activities when they cannot follow the work being done in the classroom. Remember, however, not to isolate the newcomers from their peers with separate work all day long. They, too, need to be a part of your class and should be integrated as much as possible.

**14. Provide word banks** for classroom texts, assignments, and/or projects.

**15. Be Bold!** Bold or use different colors to highlight key terms or sections of text.

**16. Use instructional tools.** Examples are using KWL charts, Mind Maps, Graphic Organizers, etc. as assessment tools as well as teaching tools.

**17. Teach organizational skills** such as how to read a textbook, how to organize a binder, test-taking skills, note-taking skills, and mnemonic devices.

**18. Divide and conquer!** Divide the text and/or test over two or three sections or sittings.

**19. Model thinking and reading processes.** Use a projector, overhead, or chalkboard, talk and read aloud while modeling thinking.

**20. Post-it Art/Graffiti Wall.** Use a post-it note and have the students create a colorful visual with lots of detail. Put the post-it note on the corresponding page of the novel or text. Use the post-it note as a way to start discussion. Make it for a whole class and use a big piece of paper.

# ***Sheltered Instruction Observational Protocol (SIOP)***

## **Preparation**

\_\_\_\_\_ Write **content objectives** clearly for students:

\_\_\_\_\_ Write **language objectives** clearly for students:

\_\_\_\_\_ Choose **content concepts appropriate** for age and educational background level of students. *List them:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Identify **supplementary materials** to use (graphs, models, visuals).

*List materials:*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Adapt content** (e.g., text, assignment) to all levels of student proficiency.

*List ideas for adaptation:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Plan **meaningful activities** that integrate lesson concepts (e.g., surveys, letter writing, simulations, constructing models) with language practice opportunities for reading, writing, listening, and/or speaking.

*List them:*

## **Building Background**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Explicitly link concepts to students' backgrounds and experiences.**

*Examples:*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Explicitly link past learning and new concepts.**

*Examples:*

\_\_\_\_\_ **Emphasize key vocabulary** (e.g., introduce, write, repeat, and highlight) for students.

*List key vocabulary:*

## **Comprehensible Input**

\_\_\_\_\_ Use **speech** appropriate for students' proficiency levels (e.g., slower rate, enunciation, and simple sentence structure for beginners).

\_\_\_\_\_ **Explain academic tasks** clearly.

\_\_\_\_\_ Use a **variety of techniques** to make content concepts clear (e.g., modeling, visuals, hands-on activities, demonstrations, gestures, body language).

*List them:*

## **Strategies**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide ample opportunities for students to use **strategies**, (e.g., problem solving, predicting, organizing, summarizing, categorizing, evaluating, self-monitoring).

*List them:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Use **scaffolding techniques** consistently (providing the right amount of support to move students from one level of understanding to a higher level) throughout lesson.

*List them:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Use a variety of **question types including those that promote higher-order thinking** skills throughout the lesson (e.g., literal, analytical, and interpretive questions).

*List them:*

### **Interaction**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide frequent **opportunities for interactions** and discussion between teacher/student and among students, and encourage elaborated responses.

\_\_\_\_\_ Use **group configurations** that support language and content objectives of the lesson.

*List the grouping types:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide sufficient **wait time for student responses** consistently.

\_\_\_\_\_ Give ample opportunities for **students to clarify key concepts in L1 (native or first language)** as needed with aide, peer, or L1 text.

### **Practice/Application**

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide **hands-on materials** and/or manipulatives for students to practice using new content knowledge.

*List materials:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide activities for students to **apply content and language knowledge** in the classroom.

*List them:*

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide activities that **integrate all language skills** (i.e., reading, writing, listening, and speaking).

*List them:*

### **Lesson Delivery**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Support content objectives** clearly.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Support language objectives** clearly.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Engage students** approximately 90-100% of the period (most students taking part and on task throughout the lesson).

\_\_\_\_\_ **Pace** the lesson appropriately to the students' ability level.

### **Review/Assessment**

\_\_\_\_\_ Give a comprehensive **review of key vocabulary**.

\_\_\_\_\_ Give a comprehensive **review of key content concepts**.

\_\_\_\_\_ Provide **feedback** to students regularly on their output (e.g., language, content, work).

\_\_\_\_\_ Conduct **assessments** of student comprehension and learning throughout lesson on all lesson objectives (e.g., spot checking, group response).

## ***Home and School Communication Strategies***

### **Informal Meeting: Exchange information with parents about race, language, and culture.**

- Ask how they would like their child to be identified ethnically.
- Ask what family tradition you would like the program to acknowledge.
- Ask what can be learned about their culture in order to be as respectful as possible.
- Ask what language/s their family speaks.
- Ask what holidays they celebrate.

### **Involve families in the life of the school.**

- Identify your building's bilingual contacts and enlist their help in communicating with families (written, phone, or in person conferences).
- Draw parents into the school routine or school events. Administrators can help to ensure that school meetings are announced and held bilingually.
- Begin written communication via a notebook (one column for teachers and one for families).
- Ask families to share their skills/knowledge with the class (i.e. trips they've taken, games, dance, crafts, traditions, etc).

### **Use parent/family conferences to set mutual goals for students.**

- During conference, work with parents to establish goals for their children (i.e. cultural understanding, language development, anti-bias attitude).
- Striving toward a common goal can create more opportunities for learning at home and at school (i.e. encourage the child to retain his home language even though his goal at school is to learn English).



## ***Translation Etiquette***

Often times we find that we are not able to communicate with our students' families; therefore, we seek the professional services of a translator. It is important that we remember "translation etiquette" when we are in a conference where a translator is needed.

- Maintain eye contact – Just because you are not speaking the same language, doesn't mean that you shouldn't look at the parent when you are speaking to them. Direct your comments at the parent and look them in the eye when you are talking. This will not offend the translator and will help the parents feel like you are truly speaking to them.
- Limit side conversations – It can be a bit boring to listen to the parents and translator speak in their native language; however, it is important to respect the conversation and listen. You may not understand what they are saying, but you can tell a lot by body language and listening to the conversation shows that you respect what they are saying.
- Direct your questions to the parent and not to the translator – This can be a bit awkward; yet, as it was mentioned earlier it is important to remember that you are having a conversation with the parent and not the translator.
- Keep it short and sweet – Remember to speak in short phrases and pause frequently to allow the translator to do their job. You want to make sure that they are translating all the information that you want to share and not bits and pieces.
- Use a normal tone – Just because the parent doesn't speak English does not mean that they are unable to hear you. Remember to use the same level of voice and tone that you would normally use with a native English speaker. Speaking loudly will not help them to have a better understanding of what you have to say.
- Respect the right to use a translator – Many times parents have a limited proficiency of English; however, they still request a translator. Remember that despite the fact that they know some English, they may not feel comfortable with the academic English that is often used in school settings.

## ***“Fact or Fib?”***

1. Young children are more effective language learners than older learners.

Fact                      or                      Fib

2. Acquiring an additional language is completely different than acquiring one’s first language.

Fact                      or                      Fib

3. Most mistakes that second language learners make are due to interference from their primary language.

Fact                      or                      Fib

4. Important variables impacting upon the language acquisition success of learners include the following: the level and quality of proficiency one has in their primary language, language aptitude, age, motivation, and how comfortable one feels in the immersion environment.

Fact                      or                      Fib

5. There are many ways that teachers can speed up students’ acquisition of a language.

Fact                      or                      Fib

6. English Learners would be best served in separate EL programs until they are proficient enough to be placed in rigorous academic programs.

Fact                      or                      Fib

7. When working with English Learners, it is important for teachers to differentiate expectations or standards while students are acquiring the new language.

Fact                      or                      Fib

8. The presence of too many English Learners lowers the standards of classroom and schools since using effective instructional strategies for them in the mainstream classroom slows down the learning of the other students.

Fact                      or                      Fib

9. Students’ linguistic and academic development is delayed when they have to submit to semesters of instruction that adapt or water down subject matter using simplistic language discourse.

Fact                      or                      Fib

10. Assessing English Learners suspected of having a learning disability or special need can be done using the same procedures as those with native English students but should be conducted in the student’s primary language.

Fact                      or                      Fib

## ***“Fact or Fib?” Answers***

1. **Fib.** Younger language learners may be able to pronounce a new language with little or no accent and be able to perform developmentally appropriate tasks that help them to be more effective acquirers. Younger learners are also less inhibited about the process of language learning and so often take more risks. However, older students actually are more *efficient* or effective language *learners* since they are cognitively mature in their own language. In other words, since they know the systems of their own language, many are able to efficiently *learn* the other language.
2. **Fib.** Acquiring a second language is somewhat different from acquiring a first language. There are many parallels between acquiring a first and second language (i.e. errors are integral to the process, mastering the language takes about five years, acquisition and success are influenced by socio-cultural and cognitive variables). The most significant difference is that first language acquisition is *fixed* and the second is more *variable*.
3. **Fib.** Most of the *pronunciation* mistakes second language learners might make might be considered as interference from the primary language (i.e. accent). Other mistakes, however, are more developmental in nature (i.e. morphological, syntactical, and semantic). EL and classroom teachers need to monitor students’ errors to keep track of their second language development and to provide strategic feedback to students as they progress along a second language continuum of skills and expectations. Making mistakes is natural in language development and ELs must feel free to approximate increasingly complex structures. As their proficiency increases, the number of errors decreases.
4. **Fact.**
5. **Fib.** Research indicates that the rate of second language acquisition in an academic setting is not a function of *teacher impact*. However, teachers do have an impact on students’ ultimate level of English proficiency attained (i.e. the quality of language proficiency at the end of schooling). Ten years from now, students may come back to thank you for teaching them English, but not from teaching them *fast*.
6. **Fib.** A traditional approach to servicing ELs had been a sequential model of first language acquisition and then academic achievement. Since research showed that this approach led to students falling behind academically, a current approach focuses on supporting ELs to acquire language and to achieve academically at the same time.
7. **Fib.** It is important not to differentiate expectations or standards. Traditionally, it has been assumed that ELs are remedial in nature. When English Learners are expected to meet the same standards, it is more akin to ‘immersion’. Equity for ELs is achieved through instruction to meet expectations and not through lowering standards.
8. **Fib.** This implies a perception that linguistic and cultural diversity is a deficit rather than a resource. Schools with a majority of ELs and those that display exemplary reform efforts share: a school-wide vision of excellence that incorporates ELs and creates a community of learners engaged in active inquiry, programs that develop English proficiency and cultivate primary-language skills, and an effort to hire multilingual staff who are trained to support linguistically and culturally-diverse students.
9. **Fact.**
10. **Fact.**

## Helpful Resources

- “Strategies for Success with English Language Learners” by Virginia Pauline Rojas
- Department of Education’s Legal Guidance  
<http://www.doe.in.gov/achievement/english-learners/legal-guidance>
- Exodus Refugee Immigration  
<http://www.exodusrefugee.org/>
- Church World Service  
[http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/site/PageServer?pagename=action\\_what\\_assist\\_main](http://hunger.cwsglobal.org/site/PageServer?pagename=action_what_assist_main)
- ENL Survival Guide  
<http://enlsurvivalguide.weebly.com/>
- Common Mistakes  
<http://www.common-mistakes.net/>

# ***Iceberg of Culture***

## **Culture**

When working with students who come from a different culture than your own, it is important to recognize that some of their actions, which you might find to be disrespectful or out-of-place, might have a place within their heritage culture. Just as an iceberg is ninety percent submerged under the water, our culture is ninety percent submerged in our actions, behaviors, and thoughts.

### **The Iceberg Concept of Culture**

Like an iceberg, the majority of culture is below the surface.

#### **Surface Culture**

Above sea level

Emotional load: relatively low

food • dress • music •  
visual arts • drama • crafts  
dance • literature • language  
celebrations • games



#### **Deep Culture**

##### Unspoken Rules

Partially below sea level

Emotional load: very high

##### Unconscious Rules

Completely below sea level

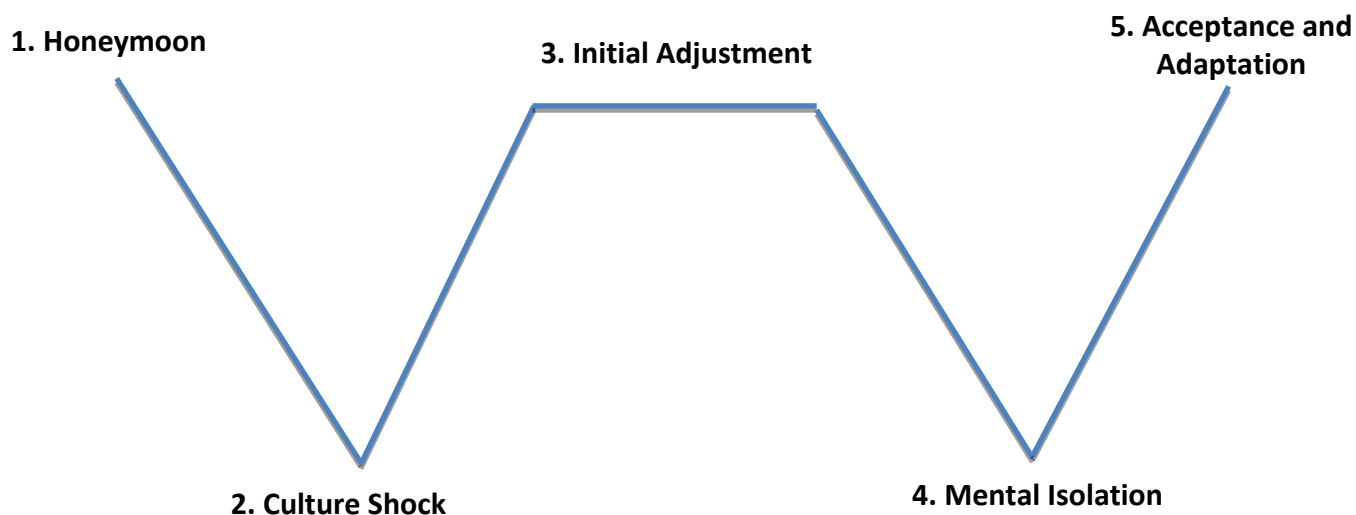
Emotional load: intense

courtesy • contextual conversational patterns • concept of time  
personal space • rules of conduct • facial expressions  
nonverbal communication • body language • touching • eye contact  
patterns of handling emotions • notions of modesty • concept of beauty  
courtship practices • relationships to animals • notions of leadership  
tempo of work • concepts of food • ideals of childrearing  
theory of disease • social interaction rate • nature of friendships  
tone of voice • attitudes toward elders • concept of cleanliness  
notions of adolescence • patterns of group decision-making  
definition of insanity • preference for competition or cooperation  
tolerance of physical pain • concept of "self" • concept of past and future  
definition of obscenity • attitudes toward dependents • problem-solving  
roles in relation to age, sex, class, occupation, kinship, and so forth



## ***The Adjustment Process***

The adjustment process to a new culture can be difficult. Understanding the cultural adjustment process can help your student in coping with the often intense feelings that may be experienced as the student begins life in the U.S. “Symptoms” or outward signs typifying certain kinds of behavior characterize each stage in the process.



1. **“Honeymoon” period:** Initially, many people are fascinated and excited by everything new. The visitor is elated to be in a new culture.
2. **“Culture shock”:** The individual is immersed in new problems: housing, transportation, shopping, and language. Mental fatigue results from continuous straining to comprehend the new language.
3. **Initial Adjustment:** Everyday activities such as housing and shopping are no longer major problems. Although the visitor may not yet be fluent in the language spoken, basic ideas and feelings in the second language can be expressed.
4. **Mental Isolation:** Individuals have been away from their family and good friends for a long period of time and may feel lonely. Many still feel they cannot express themselves as well as they can in their native language. Frustration and sometimes a loss of self-confidence result. Some individuals remain at this stage.
5. **Acceptance and Integration:** A routine (e.g., work, business or school) has been established. The visitor has accepted the habits, customs, foods, and characteristics of the people in the new culture. The visitor feels comfortable with friends, associates and the language of the country.

Note: This cycle may repeat itself throughout the stay in a new culture. AND, these feelings are normal. Note also that upon returning home, the student may experience some of the same feelings as he or she did when he or she first arrived in the new culture. This is called “reverse culture shock.”

This information was adapted from “Beyond Language: Intercultural Communication for English as a Second Language” by Deena R. Levine and Maram B. Adelman. Prentice-Hall, Inc. Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey.

# ***Refugee 101 Information***

## **What is a Refugee?**

Refugees are defined under international law as being outside their home country and having a well-founded fear of persecution based on race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. The United Nations 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees codified this definition and was augmented by a 1967 protocol broadening refugee recognition beyond an initial focus on Europeans displaced after World War II. At present, 147 nations are parties to either the 1951 Convention or the 1967 Protocol, the text of which can be accessed [here](#).

## **How Many Refugees Are in the World?**

According to a 2009 report by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR), 42 million people around the world were uprooted from their homes due to conflict or persecution. Of this number, 16 million were considered refugees, while 26 million were displaced within their own countries or were considered asylum-seekers in other countries. Approximately 45% of the world's refugees are under 18-years-old. About 80% of the world's refugees are hosted by developing countries. The largest refugee producing countries at present include Afghanistan, Iraq, Somali and Sudan, while Colombia, Iraq, Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo have the largest internally displaced populations. To learn more about the world's refugees, visit the U.S. Committee for Refugee and Immigrant's (USCRI) annual World Refugee Survey, or UNHCR's "Statistics" Web page.

## **When did U.S. Refugee Resettlement Begin?**

The U.S. admitted more than 250,000 displaced Europeans following World War II, after which the U.S. Congress enacted the Displaced Persons Act of 1948 allowing an additional 400,000 European refugees to resettle in the U.S. This legislation was followed by later laws admitting refugees from Communist countries such as China, Cuba, Hungary, Korea, Poland and Yugoslavia.

The modern refugee resettlement program traces its roots to the 1975 admission of over 100,000 Southeast Asian refugees under an ad hoc resettlement program called the Refugee Task Force. In 1980, Congress formalized the refugee resettlement program in the Refugee Act of 1980, which included the UN criteria for refugee status and set the legal basis for the Refugee Admissions Program. Today this program is operated by the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration (PRM) of the U.S. Department of State in conjunction with the Office

of Refugee Resettlement in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and offices in the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS). For more about the U.S. Refugee Resettlement Program, see the Refugee Council USA Web site.

### **How Many Refugees Live in the United States?**

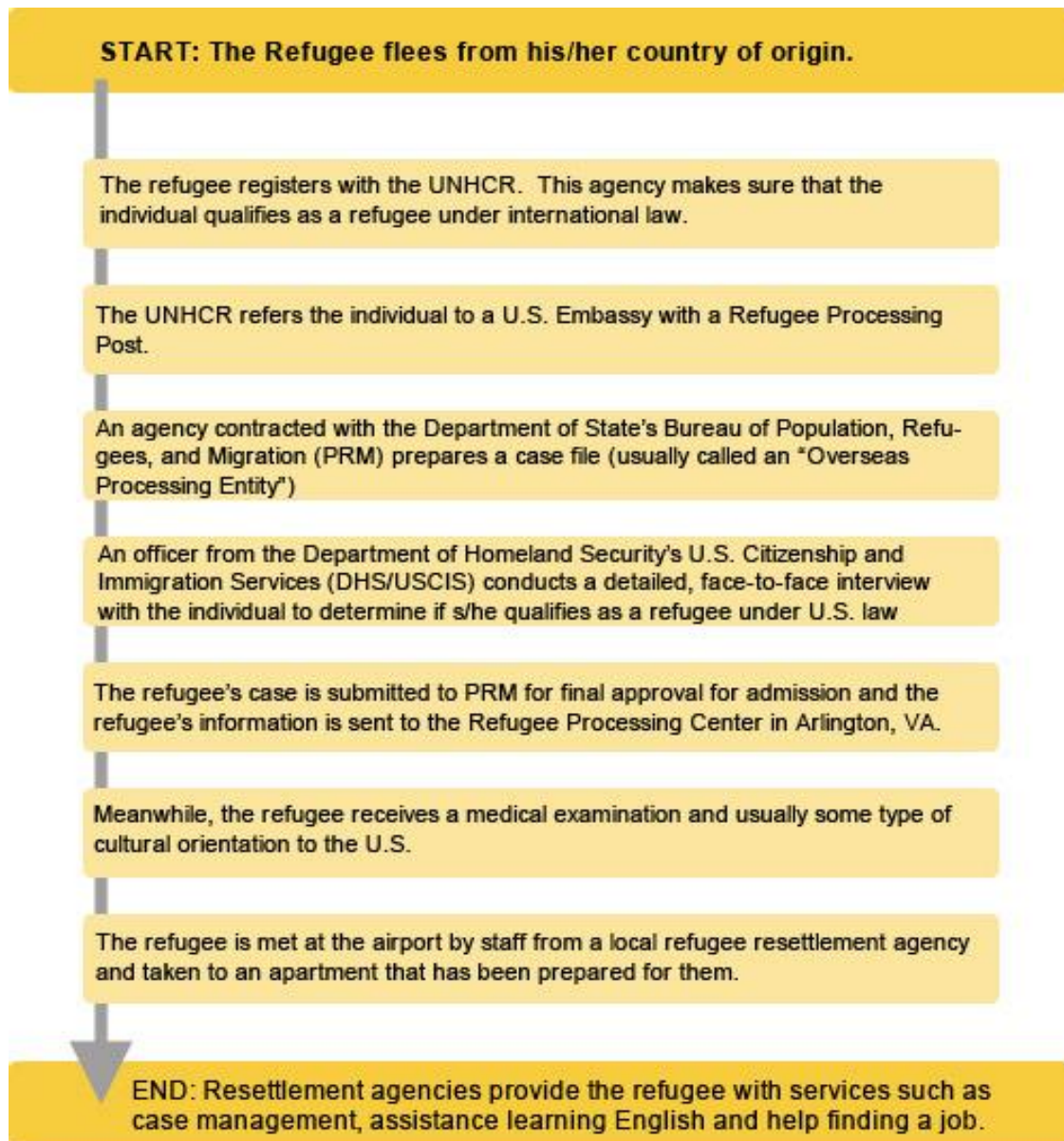
Since 1980, when formal U.S. refugee resettlement began, 1.8 million refugees have been invited to live in the United States, with recent annual refugee arrivals typically falling between 40,000 to 75,000. The number of individuals granted asylum in the U.S. over the past decade has ranged from a high of 39,000 in 2001 to just below 23,000 in 2008.

About 35 to 40 percent of refugees resettled in the U.S. are children. The vast majority of refugee children—about 95%—resettle in the U.S. with their parents. About five percent of refugee children are resettled with relatives or other adults who have agreed to care for the children, while about 100 to 200 children per year are placed into specialized foster care through the Unaccompanied Refugee Minor Program.

### **How Does U.S. Refugee Resettlement Work?**

Each year, the President of the United States consults with Congress to determine the regional number of refugees to be admitted into the country during the federal fiscal year. Over the past decade (1999-2009), this presidential determination has allowed for up to 70,000 – 91,000 refugees to enter the U.S. These numbers represent a ceiling rather than a quota, thus the actual number of resettled refugees varies each year, with a decade high of 85,000 refugees admitted in 1999 and a low of 27,000 refugees admitted in 2002. The U.S. admitted over 60,000 refugees in Fiscal Year 2008. For a chart of refugee admissions into the U.S. since 1975, visit <http://www.wrapsnet.org/Reports/AdmissionsArrivals/tabid/211/language/en-US/Default.aspx> The graphic below explains the resettlement process from the perspective of an individual refugee.





### **What is the Difference between Immigrants, Refugees, and Asylees?**

While immigrants voluntarily choose to leave their homes and come to the U.S., refugees and asylees are forced to flee due to persecution. Immigrants may come to the U.S. with temporary visas, allowing them to remain for a certain period of time or under certain conditions (such as students or tourists), or they may have permission allowing them to remain indefinitely (such as a "green card.") After one year of residence in the U.S., refugees and asylees may apply for legal permanent residency (also known as a "green card" though the card is no longer green). After five years, legal permanent residents may apply for U.S. citizenship.

Refugees and asylees must both meet the same legal definition of having a well-founded fear of

persecution due to race, religion, nationality, political opinion, or membership in a particular social group. However, refugees receive legal permission to resettle in the United States before they arrive, whereas asylees receive permission to stay in the United States after they arrive. Those who come to the U.S. seeking sanctuary from persecution are considered asylum-seekers. Once in the United States, they can apply for asylum in order to receive legal protection. Both refugees and asylees must meet the same criteria as set forth by the 1951 UN international convention in order to receive their status.

### **What is the Refugee Experience like before Resettlement?**

In addition to the trauma of war or persecution, separation from family and homeland, losses of loved ones and a familiar life, refugees may also have to deal with poverty and a lack of control over their lives, living between moments of crisis and boredom, anticipation and hopelessness. In situations of lengthy displacement, refugee children may be born and raised in exile knowing little beyond life in a refugee camp.

Students can learn more about refugee youth through *Beyond the Fire: Teen Experiences in War*. This interactive website chronicles the stories of fifteen refugee teenagers, who lived through warfare and fled their homes in eight different countries. Their stories are complete with photographs of family and loved ones that bring their experiences of war to life. The web site also provides a brief chronology of the events in each country to explain how the conflict developed. These fifteen refugee teenagers illustrate the types of experiences that refugee youth encounter abroad before being resettled.

A Refugee Camp on the Web is another interactive web site, which allows viewers to place themselves in the shoes of refugees. Through a series of slides, the web site uses photographs, interviews and audio recordings to depict life as a refugee. Visitors must think about the same critical questions that refugee families struggle with every day. Where to find shelter? Where to find food? How to seek medical attention in the refugee camps? This Web site illustrates the difficulties that refugee youth must overcome to arrive in safe havens like the United States.

### **What is the Resettlement Experience Like in the United States?**

Ten national voluntary agencies (volags) provide resettlement services to newly arriving refugees, arranging for food, housing, clothing, employment, counseling, medical care and other immediate needs during the first 90 days after arrival. Depending on the state, refugees may be eligible for additional specialized services after that period. With some state variation, refugees are eligible for federally reimbursed cash assistance and Medicaid for eight months

after arrival, after which they have the same eligibility for public benefits as other legal residents of a State. Unlike immigrants, refugees are permitted to receive federally funded public benefits. However, after seven years in the U.S., refugees must acquire U.S. citizenship for continued eligibility.

Refugees are permitted to work in the U.S., and many refugee service programs focus on helping refugees find employment so that they can become self-sufficient. Refugee children are eligible for public education in the same way as other children in the U.S., and many states receive federal funding to implement specialized educational programming for refugee children.

Once in the U.S., refugees are frequently helped by family, clan, or ethnic community networks. Many refugee groups form ethnic community based organizations, also known as mutual assistance associations (MAA), to provide mutual aid, advice and support to others from the same ethnic, linguistic or national background. These MAA's create a critical bridge between knowledgeable community members and those who have recently arrived in the U.S. or are currently in need.

In assisting refugee families and children, service providers need access to in-depth information about refugee cultures, trauma, resulting family dynamics and the special needs of refugee youth. Culturally and linguistically appropriate staffing and services are essential, as are understanding and communication between agencies. Attending to these needs helps agencies build productive partnerships with refugee communities, provide effective services and resources, and support refugee parents in the difficult task of raising their children in a new culture.

Professionals working in the fields of child well-being and refugee services recognize the communal nature of problems they encounter, as well as the need for collaborative responses. Child welfare agencies work with a range of social service agencies, professionals, and communities in assisting families and guarding against child abuse and neglect. Refugee-serving agencies also bring together resources and people from many walks of life for the purpose of supporting refugee families.

### **Where Can I Find More Information and Statistics?**

- IRC's U.S. Programs Refugee 101
- Refugee Council USA– for additional background information and a directory of refugee

resettlement agencies

- UNHCR Statistics
- U.S. State Department's Refugee Processing Center – U.S. refugee admissions within the past fiscal year
- Refugee Arrival Data by the Office of Refugee Resettlement – Country of origin and state of initial resettlement
- Center for Applied Linguistics – Refugee resettlement by country and region of origin
- Immigration Data Hub by the Migration Policy Institute
- Data and Statistics – Department of Homeland Security,

# ***Quick Culture Facts: Hispanics, Karen, and Arab Cultures***

## **Hispanic**

313,914,040 people live in the US as of 2012:  
49,972,000 people in the US identified as “Hispanic”  
32,539,000 come from a **Mexican** origin  
4,625,000 come from a **Puerto Rican** origin  
1,789,000 are from a **Cuban** origin  
4,205,000 people are from **Central America**  
2,830,000 are from **South America**  
3,984,000 identified as “other Hispanic”

Spain, the former imperial ruler of much of Central and South America, is the origin of the words “Spanish” and “Hispanic” – a reason why many Spanish-speakers in the United States refer to themselves as Latino(a) instead (as a symbol of independence from Spain).

## **Karen and Karenni**

People who identify as Karen come from the mountains of Burma (formerly known as Myanmar), a country in Southeast Asia, and parts of Thailand. Karen are traditionally subsistence farmers and raise animals and make up the third largest ethnic population in Burma.

Those who identify as Karenni (the “-ni” means Red) are a collection of small states. Traditionally, the “Karen-Ni States”—once independent of Burma, yet with feudal ties—are made up of the many groups of independent peoples: the Kayah, Geko, Geba, Padaung, Bres, Manu-Manaus, Yintale, Yinbaw, Bwe, Shan, and Pao.

## **Arab**

“Arab” is significantly different from “Muslim.” If a student identifies as an “Arab” (s)he speaks Arabic/comes from a country that identifies Arabic as the national language. Muslim is a religion that one practices and does not necessarily denote that the student will speak Arabic. Lebanon, Egypt, Albania, Libya, Morocco, Mauritania, and Syria are a handful of Arab states.

The traditional dress for Arab men is designed for heightened air circulation around the body (i.e. floor length robes). The men will also wear a headdress that is called a Keffiyeh. Women wear a full-length body cover, but the strictness varies by country.